INDIA IN VEDIC TIMES

STORIES OF
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OR,

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THREE THOUSAND YEARS AGO.

THE COMMON ORIGIN OF THE ARYAN HINDUS AND EUROPEANS, WITH A DESCRIPTION OF INDIA IN VEDIC TIMES.

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INDIA IN VEDIC TIMES.

Introduction.

Of all countries our own is to us the most interesting and important. It is desirable that we should have some knowledge of its history. Who were its first inhabitants? Where did they come from? What was their condition when they entered the country?

It would [require many volumes to give a complete account of the history of India, and the many changes through which it has passed. In this little book only a brief description can be given of the country when the Aryans entered it more than three thousand years ago. There were no historians then; writing was probably unknown; but the hymns of the Rig-Veda, handed down orally from father to son, enable us to form a fairly complete idea both of the Aryans and those whom they sought to conquer.

The Aborigines.

The earliest inhabitants of India are supposed to have been a small dark negro-like race, who were spread over a great part of south-eastern Asia. The Andaman islanders represent them at the present time. Traces of them are still found in various spots; but always in the most mountainous and inaccessible regions. The name *negrito*, little negro, has been given them.

The Andamanese women are only about 3 cubits in height; the men are about 3 inches taller. Their skin is nearly black. Their heads are of the short round type, and their hair is very closely curled.



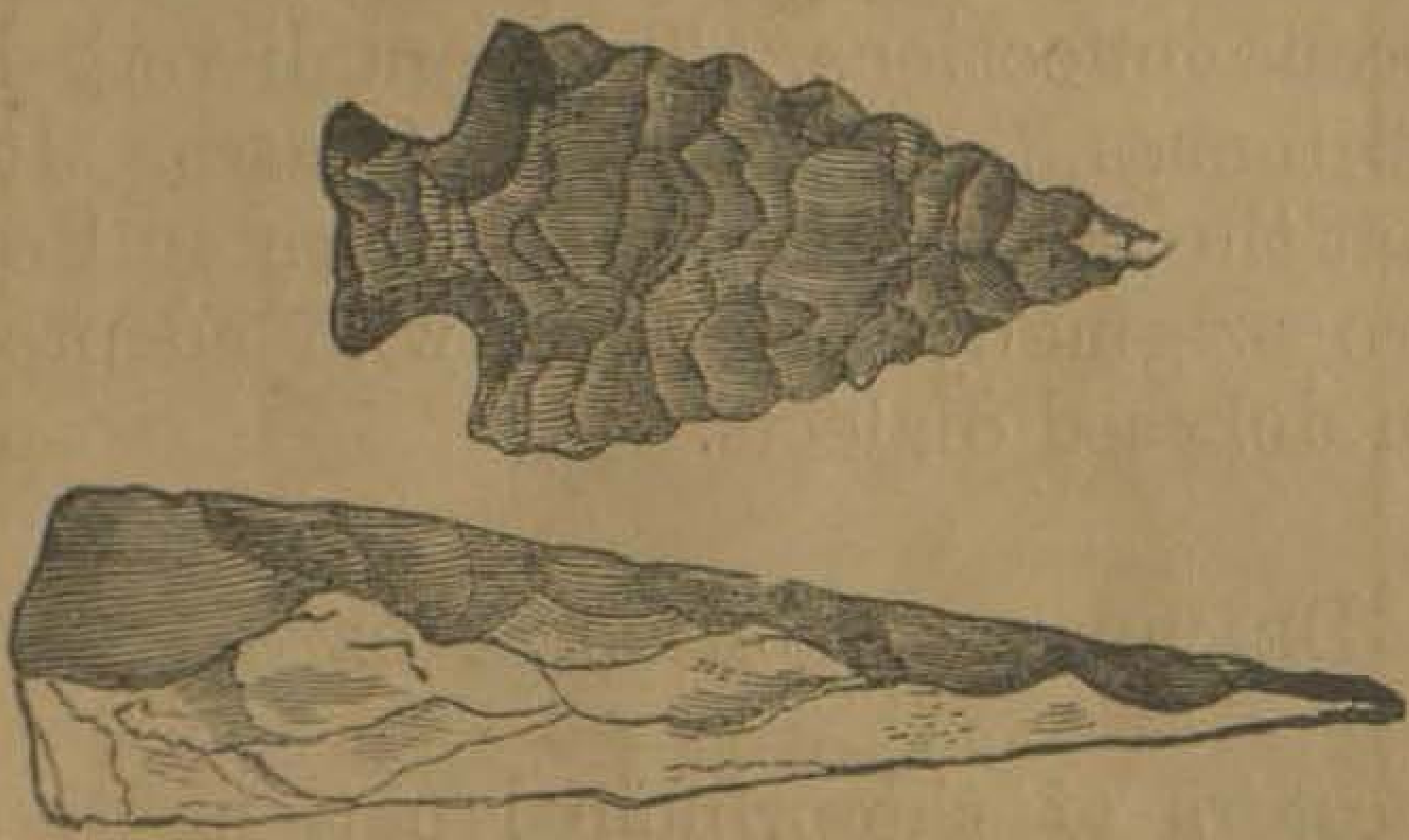
ANDAMANESE.

The Andamanese go nearly naked, their only clothing being a sort of girdle of leaves. They do not cultivate the ground, nor keep any domestic animals; but they have a rude kind of hand-made pottery. They live chiefly on wild pigs, fish, wild fruits, roots, the larvæ of insects and honey. Before Europeans came to the islands, they had no metals. Their principal weapon is the bow and arrow. Their arrow heads are made of chipped flints.

How do we know that India was ever peopled by such a race, as they have long ago disappeared?

In different parts of India rough flint arrow-heads have been found in the soil. These did not come of themselves;

the only probable supposition is that they were used by a race like those described.



The earliest stone implements are rough, being merely chipped. When a little progress has been made in civilisation, they are polished.

Weapons of this kind have been dug up in the Central Provinces and in some other parts of India. Specimens of them can be seen in the Presidency Museums.

There were probably, at a later period, other tribes, like some of those in India at present, who knew how to make round pots of earthenware, not inelegant in shape, and wore ornaments of copper and gold. Their remains are rude stone circles and upright slabs and mounds, beneath which, like the primitive peoples of Europe, they buried their dead.

Races from the North-East.

At an early period some tribes, who dwelt in Central Asia along with the ancestors of the Mongolians and Chinese, entered India by the north-eastern passes, and spread over the base of the Himalayas and their north-eastern offshoots. Such are the Nagas, Garos, and Kukis. Another race, called Kolarians, appear to have entered India by the same route, and to have proceeded in a south-westerly direction. The Santals and Kols are two of the principal tribes. The Kolarians are more squarely built than the Hindus, the forehead is not so high, the lips a

little thicker, and the cast of countenance somewhat resemble the negro type. Their languages are distinct from the Northern and Southern families, and are noted for their numerous inflections. The Santali verb has 5 voices, 5 moods, 23 tenses, 3 numbers and 4 cases. It is supposed by some that the Bhils and other tribes in Rajputana and Malwa were originally Kolarians, who adopted an Aryan language in debased dialects.

Dravidians from the North-West.

The ancestors of the principal nations of South India appear to have entered India from the north-west. They are classed under the general name of *Dravidians.*

The languages of the world are divided into three great classes. Chinese is an example of the first. All words consist of one syllable, and do not undergo any change to express number or gender. The same word may be any part of speech. The meaning of a sentence depends upon the arrangement of the words. *Ngo ta ni* means "I beat thee;" but *ni ta gno* means "Thou beatest me." Words may be joined, as in black-board, but each retains its original form. Such languages are called "isolating," using each word by itself.

In the second class of languages, of two roots which unite to form a word, one remains distinct, and the other sinks down to a mere termination. Languages of this class are called *Agglutinative,* because the terminations are, as it were, *glued on* to the root. They include the largest number of languages, as Australian, Japanese, the Dravidian languages of India, Turkish, &c.

In the third class of languages all the roots may unite or have their original distinctness made obscure. They are said to be *Inflectional* or *Amalgamating*. The words seem all of one piece, whereas in Agglutinative languages the joinings can be seen. The languages of Northern India and most of the languages of Europe belong to this class.

Where the Dravidians who entered India came from is not known with certainty. As the Turkish language

belongs to the same class, they may have come from Turkestan. In ancient times this was called Scythia by the Greeks and Romans. Hence the Dravidians have sometimes been called *Scythians*.

It would seem as if the two streams, the Kolarians from the north-east and the Dravidians from the north-west, had crossed each other in Central India. The Dravidians proved the stronger, broke up the Kolarians, and thrust aside their fragments to the east and west. The Dravidians then went forward in a mighty body to the south.

The cultivated Dravidian languages are found only in South India, as Tamil, Telugu, Canarese, and Malayalam; but there are wild tribes, as the Gonds and Khonds, speaking them in different parts of India as far as the Rajmahal Hills.

A comparison between some common words will show that the languages of the Dravidians differ from those of the Aryans in the north:

English.	*Hindi.*	*Bengali.*	*Tamil.*	*Telugu.*
Man	manas	manusha	al	al
Ear	kan	karna	kadu	chevi
Mouth	mukh	mukh	vay	noru
Tooth	dant	danta	pal	pallu
Hand	háth	hát	kei	cheyi

Civilization of the early Dravidians.—The Aryans represented the inhabitants of the South of India as monkeys, as vile sinners who ate raw flesh, and disturbed the contemplations of holy Rishis. This picture might partly apply to wild tribes like the Gonds; but the southern Dravidians had acquired at least the elements of civilization before the arrival amongst them of the Brahmans.

By excluding all Sanskrit derivations from the Tamil language, Bishop Caldwell, was able to form the following picture of the early Dravidians of South India:

"They had 'Kings' who dwelt in 'strong houses,' and ruled over small districts of country. They had 'minstrels' who recited 'songs' at 'festivals,' and they seem to have had alphabetical 'characters' written with a stylus on palmyra leaves.

A bundle of those leaves was called a 'book.' They acknowledged the existence of God, whom they styled 'Kô' or king. They erected to his honor a 'temple,' which they called 'Kô-il,' God's house. Marriage existed among them. They were acquainted with the ordinary metals with the exception of tin, lead, and zinc; with all the planets ordinarily known to the ancients, excepting Mercury and Saturn. They had numerals up to a hundred, some of them up to a thousand. They had 'medicines,' 'hamlets' and 'towns,' but no 'cities,' 'canoes,' 'boats', and even 'ships' (small decked coasting vessels.)

"They were well versed in 'agriculture,' and delighted in 'war.' They were armed with 'bows' and 'arrows,' with 'spears,' and 'swords.' All the ordinary and necessary arts of life, including 'spinning,' 'weaving,' and 'dyeing,' existed among them. They excelled in 'pottery,' as their places of sepulchre show.

"They had no acquaintance with 'painting,' 'sculpture' or 'architecture;' with 'astronomy,' or even with 'astrology;' and were ignorant, not only of every branch of 'philosophy,' but even of 'grammar.' Their only words for the 'mind' were the diaphragm* and the 'inner parts' or 'interior.' They had a word for 'thought,' but no distinct word for 'memory,' 'judgment,' or 'conscience,' and no word for 'will.'"

It is a question among learned men whether the inhabitants of Northern India, whom the Aryans called Dasyus, were the same as the Southern Dravidians. Some think that they were Dravidians, who came at a later period.

Common Origin of the Aryan Hindus and Europeans.

Though the whole human race are descended from the same first parents, some nations lived near each other in early times, speaking the same or kindred languages. The Hindus now call Europeans Mlechhas, impure barbarians; but it is certain that their ancestors once lived together, speaking the same language and worshipping the same God by the self-same name. Language is a clear proof of this. Max Müller says:—

"The terms for God. for house, for father, mother, son, daughter for dog and cow, for heart and tears, for ox and tree,

* The division between the chest and the belly.

identical in all the Indo-European idioms, are like the watch-words of soldiers. We challenge the seeming stranger, and whether he answers with the lips of a Greek, German, or an Indian, we recognise him as one of ourselves."*

Dr. John Muir gives a list of several hundred words in Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and English, showing the affinities of these languages. Only a few can be quoted :

Sanskrit.	*Greek.*	*Latin.*	*English.*
pitar	pater	pater	father
mátar	mētēr	mater	mother
bhrátar	phratria(clan)	frater	brother
duhitar	thugatēr		daughter
násà		násus	nose
mūsh	mūs	mus	mouse
divya	dios	dīvus	divine
star, tára	astēr	astrum	star
dvi	duo	duo	two
trayas	treis	tres	three
saptan	hepta	septem	seven
dasan	deka	decem	ten
sahasra	chilioi	mille	thousand

Father is derived from a root *pa,* which means to protect, to support. The father, as one who begets, was called in Sanskrit *ganitár.* In like manner *mátar* is joined to *ganitar,* Latin *genetrix.* The original meaning of *duhitar* was *milk-maid.* Milking the cattle was one of the employments of the daughter.

The numerals agree as far as a hundred. Thousand had not received expression at that early period; hence the names for thousand differ. Sanskrit and Zend share the name for thousand in common (Sanskrit *sahasra,* Zend *hazanra*) which shows that the ancestors of the Brahmans and Parsis continued united for a time after the Western Aryans had left. The Greeks and Romans each formed independently their own name for thousand.

Many other illustrations might be given of the common origin of the languages.

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* *Ancient Sanskrit Literature,* pp. 13, 14.

Sanskrit was not the original from which all the rest were derived, for Greek has, in several instances, a more primitive form than Sanskrit. *Esmes*, we are, cannot be derived from the Sanskrit *smas*, because *smas* has lost the radical *a*, which Greek has preserved, the root being *as*, to be, the termination *mas*, we. Nor can Greek be fixed upon as the more primitive language from which the others were derived, for not even Latin could be called the daughter of Greek, the language of Rome having preserved some forms more primitive than Greek; for instance *sunt* instead of *enti*. Here Greek has lost the radical *as* altogether; while the Latin has at least, like Sanskrit, preserved the radical *s* in *sunt*=*santi*.

Hence all these dialects point to some more ancient language that died in giving birth to the modern Aryan dialects. That language was once a living language spoken in Asia by a small tribe, may, originally by a small family living under one aud the same roof.*

The exact spot of the early Aryan home is not yet known with certainty. Some contend that it was in eastern Europe; but more probably it was in Central Asia, north of Persia which is called Iran by its inhabitants. It was colder than India, for years were reckoned by "winters."

THE EUROPEAN OR WESTERN ARYAN MIGRATIONS.

As the Aryans increased in numbers their original seat could not support them all; so, like some of their descendants of the present time, they swarmed off, most going to the west.

As far as is yet known, the earliest inhabitants of Europe were a small uncivilised race of men, somewhat like the Esquimaux. Europe was then covered with forests, and much colder than at present. These aborigines subsisted by hunting, fishing, and on wild fruits. Pieces of bone, with drawings on them, have been found in caves—relics of their existence.

* Abridged from *Chips from a German Workshop*, Vol. II.

The Celts, or Gauls, found farthest west, were probably the first Aryans who entered Europe. At one time they occupied a great part of the continent. At a later period came the ancestors of the Italians, Greeks, and Germans. The Slavonic nations, to which the Russians belong, took a more northerly course.

Max Müller thus describes their future history :—

"The Aryan nations who pursued a north-westerly direction, stand before us as the principal nations of north-western Asia and Europe. They have been the prominent actors in the great drama of history, and have carried to their fullest growth all the elements of active life with which our nature is endowed. They have perfected society and morals, and we learn from their literature and works of art the elements of science, the laws of art, and the principles of philosophy. In continual struggle with each other and with Semitic and Turanian races, these Aryan nations have become the rulers of history, and it seems to be their mission to link all parts of the world together by the chains of civilization, commerce, and religion. In a word, they represent the Aryan man in his historical character."*

THE EASTERN ARYAN MIGRATIONS.

We have no historical accounts to inform us when the different Aryan migrations took place. For the following reasons Max Müller concludes that the Eastern Aryans left the common home at a later period than those who went westward :—

"It is more difficult to prove that the Hindu was the last to leave this common home, that he saw his brothers all depart towards the setting sun, and that then, turning towards the south and the east, he started alone in search of a new world. But as in his language and in his grammar he has preserved something of what seems peculiar to each of the northern dialects singly, as he agrees with the Greek and the German when the Greek and the German seem to differ from all the rest, and as no other language has carried off so large a share of the common Aryan heirloom—whether roots, grammar, words, myths, or legends—it is natural to suppose that, though perhaps

* *Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 14, 15.

the eldest brother, the Hindu was the last to leave the central home of the Aryan family."

It is very uncertain when the Hindu Aryans commenced their migration towards India. The general opinion is that it was about 2,000 years before Christ, or nearly 4,000 years ago; but it may have been earlier or later.

The Eastern Aryans marched in a body, with their families, their servants, and their cattle. They had their poets who animated them by their songs, and their chiefs who led them in battle. India was probably entered by the mountain passes near Peshawar, as in the case of later invasions. Rivers were forded at conveniently shallow places, or, if deep, they were crossed in boats.

THE STATE OF INDIA WHEN ENTERED BY THE ARYANS.

The greater part of India was then covered with forest, with scattered villages and towns belonging to the aboriginal tribes. Some lived in the forests like the jungle tribes at present, subsisting by hunting and on wild fruits, with scarcely any clothing. Others, inhabiting the open plains, were partially civilised. They cultivated the ground, and had cities built of stone. In tracts of country bordering on the hills where stone was abundant, it is not improbable that it was used for building purposes. In the Rig-Veda Indra is said to have demolished a hundred cities of stone. This supposes their existence. The frequent references to forts also show that the aborigines had places of defence. In several of the Vedic hymns the wealth of the Dasyus, or aborigines is mentioned: as, "Subdue the wealth of the Dasa; may we, through Indra, divide his collected wealth." The word Dasyus is supposed to mean enemies. So many of them were enslaved that the word *dasa* was afterwards applied to a servant.

The Aryas, coming from a colder climate, were fairer than the aborigines. They had the pride of race in an extravagant degree, and showed great contempt and hatred towards those with whom they came in contact. They called the aborigines the "blackskin," and as their noses were not

so large as theirs, they were described as "goat-nosed," or "noseless." The Aryans accused the Dasyus of being "eaters of raw flesh"; they spoke a strange language; they were described as "riteless," or without religion.

The Aryans, as they advanced, gradually established themselves in the forests, fields, and villages of the aborigines. The latter contended as bravely as they could against their invaders. Their black complexion, barbarous habits, rude speech, and savage yells during their night attacks, made the Aryas, speak of them as demons.

The Aryans were the more powerful. The Dasyus were either driven before them or were reduced to slavery. The first great distinction in India was between the white and dark races, the conquerors and the conquered, the freeman and the slave. One of the earliest aboriginal tribes brought under subjection was called Sudras, and the name was extended to the whole race.

The war of invasion lasted for centuries, nor were the aborigines, as a whole, subjugated at any period.

The Indus is the great river of the Vedas; the Ganges is only twice mentioned. By degrees the Aryas spread eastward till they reached the Sarasvati, which was the boundary in Vedic times.

INDIA THREE THOUSAND YEARS AGO.

The state of society amongst the Aryans, as shown by the hymns of the Vedas, will now be described.

Villages and Towns.

The invaders gradually settled in the Panjab. Villages were placed near watercourses, in positions favourable for pasturage and agriculture. The villages in some cases grew into towns, and these into cities. The houses in general, as at present, were built of mud. Some were of so frail a construction that they trembled as the Maruts passed, that is, when the fierce winds blew. In tracts bordering on the hills, where stone was abundant, that material was sometimes used.

Rajas and Headmen.

The country occupied by the Aryas was peopled by various tribes, and divided unto numerous principalities. Many names of kings occur in the Rig-Veda. Their meetings, whether friendly or hostile, are mentioned. Indra is represented as living in the society of his wives like a king. When Mitra is said to occupy a great palace with a thousand pillars and a thousand gates, we may suppose that this is but an exaggerated description of a royal residence such as the poet had seen. The kings or chiefs did not acknowledge one superior. Hence sometimes an Aryan leader fought with an Aryan leader.

Mention is made of *purpati*, lords of cities, *gramani*, heads of villages.

Marriage.

The marriage of one wife seems to have been the rule. In some cases, from the *Svayamvara* ceremony, the bride could choose her own husband. This shows that early marriage did not prevail. There was also more or less polygamy. One hymn says "Our hymns touch thee, O strong god as loving wives a loving husband." A Rishi is said to have married in one day ten damsels. Two gods, the Ashvins, together took one wife. "Thus," says, Dr. Rajendralala Mitra, "you have in the Rig-Veda, self-choice, polygamy, and polyandry."

The general opinion of the female sex seems to have been, that put in the mouth of Indra: "Indra himself hath said, The mind of women brooks not discipline, her intellect hath little weight." VIII. 33, 17.

There were no caste restrictions about marriages. Brahmans married the daughters of Kshatriyas; They even formed unions with the widows of Kshatriyas and Vaisyas.

Among the early Aryans women were not shut up in Zenanas as among some Hindus at present who follow Muhammadan customs. Nor were they forbidden to take part in religious services, as will afterwards be shown.

There are allusions to unfaithfulness on the part of wives

and to common women. Mitra and Varuna are prayed to remove the worshipper's sin, as a woman who bears a child secretly puts it away. One of the Rishis prays twice to Pushan to protect him in all his goings, and provide him with a supply of damsels.

Dress.

References are made in the Vedas to well-dressed females and to well-made garments. From these passages and others relating to jewels, it may be gathered that considerable attention was already paid to personal decoration. The materials of the clothing were probably cotton and wool. The form of the garments was much the same as among modern Hindus. A turban is mentioned. Allusions to the needle and sewing show that made dresses were not unknown.

Two of the gods are said to wear their hair wound round upwards in the form of a shell. The priests of the family of Vaisishtha are said to have their hair-knots on the right of their heads, and to be robed in white. The bracelets, anklets, and other ornaments, said to be worn by the Maruts, were probably similar to those worn by men and women in Vedic times.

Food.

Foremost came the products of the cow. Butter and curds were essential at every meal. Fried grain, mixed with milk, was especially relished. Barley and wheat were the principal grains. There is no allusion to rice in the Rig-Veda, but it is mentioned in the later Atharva Veda. The grains were ground into flour and baked into cakes. Cakes and meal mixed with curds or butter are said to be offered to the gods. Some plants are mentioned as flowering and fruit bearing, and others not.

But *flesh* was considered the *best food*. The Satapatha Brahmana says: *Etad u ha vai paramam annádyam yan mámsam.* "Indeed, the best food is flesh."

One of the most remarkable changes in Hindu customs

since Vedic times is that with regard to the use of certain kinds of animal food. The late Dr. Rajendralala Mitra occupies the highest rank among Indian scholars, and he investigated the subject simply to give the real facts of the case. In his *Indo-Aryans*, he has a chapter headed, "Beef in Ancient India." It begins as follows:

"The title of this paper will, doubtless, prove highly offensive to most of my countrymen; but the interest attached to the enquiry in connexion with the early social history of the Aryan race on this side of the Himalaya, will, I trust, plead my excuse. The idea of beef—the flesh of the earthly representative of the divine Bhagavati—as an article of food is so shocking to the Hindus, that thousands over thousands of the more orthodox among them never repeat the counterpart of the word in their vernaculars, and many and dire have been the sanguinary conflicts which the shedding of the blood of cows has caused in this country. And yet it would seem that there was a time when not only no compunctious visitings of conscience had a place in the mind of the people in slaughtering cattle—when not only the meat of that animal was actually esteemed a valuable aliment—when not only was it a mark of generous hospitality, as among the ancient Jews, to slaughter the 'fatted calf' in honor of respected guests,—but when a supply of beef was deemed an absolute necessity by pious Hindus in their journey from this to another world, and a cow was invariably killed to be burnt with the dead. To Englishmen, who are familiar with the present temper of the people on the subject, and to a great many of the natives themselves, this remark may appear startling; but the authorities on which it is founded are so authentic and incontrovertible that they cannot, for a moment, be gainsaid."

Dr. R. Mitra quotes Colebrooke as follows: "It seems to have been anciently the custom to slay a cow on that occasion (the reception of a guest) and a guest was therefore called a *goghna*, or 'cow killer.'" In the "*Uttara-Rama-charitra* the venerable old poet and hermit Valmiki, when preparing to receive his brother sage Vasishtha, the author of one of the original law books (Smritis) which regulates the religious life of the people, and a prominent character even in the Vedas, slaughtered a lot of calves expressly for the entertainment of his guests. Vasishtha, in his turn,

likewise slaughtered the 'fatted calf' when entertaining Visvamitra, Janaka, Satananda, Jamadagnya, and other sages and friends."*

In the Rig-Veda the following prayer is addressed to Indra: "Hurl thy thunderbolt against this Vritra, and sever his joints as (butchers cut up) a cow; that the rains may issue from him." I. 61, 12.

The late Mr. Kunte, B.A. of Poona, says in his Prize Essay on *The Vicissitudes of Aryan Civilization in India*: "Hospitality was the rule of life, and guests were received with great ceremony: cows were specially killed for them." (p. 196).

The excuse has been invented that the animals were restored to life. This must have happened after they were eaten! No sensible man can accept such an explanation.

Ancient medical works show that beef was eaten in early times. "The *Charaka Sanhíta* has, in its chapter on Food a verse which says, 'the flesh of cows, buffalœs, and hogs should not be eaten daily; which clearly indicates that it was then an article which was reckoned as food; but too rich for every day use, like fish, curds, and barley cakes, which are also prohibited for everyday use. Elsewhere the author of that work recommends beef for pregnant women as it is calculated to strengthen the foetus. Susruta, in his section on food, points out the particular diseases in course of which beef should be avoided."

The ancient Aryans highly valued their cows, but they did not make gods of them and worship them like the Hindus at the present time.

The sacrifice of oxen and cows, *gomedha,* will be noticed under another head.

Intoxicating liquors are mentioned in the hymns. Nearly a whole Mandala of the Rig-Veda is devoted to the praise of the Soma juice. Wine, *sura*, was also in use. "The earliest Brahman settlers," says Dr. R. Mitra, "were a spirit-drinking race, and indulged largely both in Soma beer and strong spirits. To their gods the most acceptable

* Dr. Rajendralala Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, Vol. I, p. 380.

and grateful offering was Soma beer, and wine or spirit was publicly sold in shops for the use of the community. In the Rig-Veda Sanhita a hymn occurs which shows that wine was kept in leather bottles and freely sold to all comers. The *sura* of the *Santramani* and the *Vajapaya* was no other than arrack, manufactured from rice meal. In the Ramayana the great sage Visvamitra is said to have been entertained with *maireya* and *sura* by his host Vasishtha. In the Mahabharata, the Yadavas are represented as extremely addicted to drinking.

The evil effects of drunkenness were afterwards seen, and the use of spirituous liquor was prohibited. Manu and Yajnavalkya, two of the greatest Hindu lawgivers, held that the only expiation meet for a Brahman who had polluted himself by drinking spirit was suicide by a draught of spirit or water or cow's urine or milk in a boiling state, taken in a burning hot metal pot. Devala went a step further, and prescribed a draught of molten silver, copper, or lead as the most appropriate. One of the five commands of Buddhism is not to taste intoxicating liquors. Buddhism must have contributed much to check the spread of drunkenness in India, as it did in putting down the consumption of flesh meat; but it was never equal to the task of suppressing it.*

Grades of Society.

The two great divisions of the people in Vedic times were the Aryans and the aborigines, afterwards called Sudras. The chief occupations of the Aryans were fighting and cultivating the soil. Those who fought gradually acquired influence and rank, and their leaders appear as Rajas. Those who did not share in the fighting were called Vis, Vaisyas, or householders.

Fighting and cultivation were sometimes united. Mr. Kunte says: "The patriarch and his sons and perhaps grandsons quietly cultivated their land, but when necessary, they mounted their horses, and, sword in hand, marched against their enemies." Mr. R. C. Dutt says: "The

* Abridged from the Indo-Aryans, Vol. I. pp. 389-399.

Rishis did not form a separate and exclusive caste, and did not pass their lives away from the world in penance and contemplation. On the contrary, the Rishis were practical men of the world, who owned large herds of cattle, cultivated fields, fought against the aboriginal enemies in time of war, and prayed to their gods for wealth and cattle, for victory in wars, and for blessings on their wives and children."

Mr. Dutt has translated the Rig-Veda into Bengali, and is therefore very competent to form an opinion. He declares that in the ten thousand verses of the Rig-Veda there is only one verse of recent date containing any allusion to caste. The word *Varna*, which in later Sanskrit indicates caste, is used in the Rig-Veda to distinguish the Aryans and non-Aryans, and nowhere indicates separate sections in the Aryan community. The very word *Kshatriya*, which in later Sanskrit means the military caste, is used in the Veda simply as an adjective which means strong, and is applied to the gods! And the very word *Brahmana*, which in later Sanskrit means also the priestly caste, is used in a hundred places in the Rig-Veda to imply the composers of hymns and nothing else.

One of the Vedic Rishis says of himself: "I am a composer of hymns, my father a physician, my mother grinds corn." Later Hindus tried to make out how Visvamitra was first a Kshatriya and then became a Brahman. Visvamitra was neither a Kshatriya nor a Brahman! He was a Vedic Rishi, a warrior and priest long before the Brahmans and Kshatriyas, as such, were known.*

To the above testimony of Mr. Dutt may be added that of Max Müller who has devoted half a century to the study of the Vedas, and who first printed the text of the Rig-Veda with the Commentary of Sayana:

"There is no authority whatever in the hymns of the Veda for the complicated system of castes. There is no law to prohibit the different classes of the people from living together, from eating and drinking together; no law to prohibit the

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* *Ancient India*, pp. 95-99 abridged.

marriage of people belonging to different castes; no law to brand the offspring of such marriages with an indelible stigma. There is no law to sanction the blasphemous pretensions of a priesthood to divine honours, or the degradation of any human being to a state below the animal." *Chips*, Vol. II.

OCCUPATIONS.

The ancient Aryans were largely a pastoral people. This may be inferred from the very frequent mention of cows, the recovery of cows, the plunder of cows, the increase of cows, and gifts of cows. One of the prayers in the Vedas is, "Indra, of boundless wealth, enrich us with thousands of excellent cows and horses." As already mentioned, a daughter among them in the earliest times was called *duhitar*, milkmaid. Gopa and Gopal, keepers of cattle among them, came to mean a protector in general, no doubt from the owners or keepers of cows having great importance in the community.

"*Gotra*, cow-house, was applied to the fences erected to protect the herd from violence or prevent the cattle from straying. The Brahman boasting of his sacred blood and divine generation speaks of the particular *gotra* to which he belongs, little dreaming that the word is itself a testimony that the fathers of his race were herdsmen."

The Aryans were also agricultural. The very name Arya, by which they called themselves, is said to come from a root which means to plough.

One of the hymns is addressed to a supposed god of agriculture. The following is one of the verses:

> "Auspicious Furrow, come thou near: we venerate and worship Thee,
> That thou may bless and prosper us, and bring us fruits abundantly." IV. 57, 6.

There are references to wells, from which water was raised by pots attached to wheels as at present. Fields were also irrigated by canals. Horses were used in cultivation, which is common in Europe, but not in India in modern times.

Dr. Wilson, in his *India Three Thousand Years Ago*, gives the following sketch of the Social Life of the Aryas :

" They knew the processes of spinning and weaving, on which they were doubtless principally dependent for their clothing. They were not strangers to the use of iron and to the crafts of the blacksmith, coppersmith, carpenter and other artisans. They used hatchets in felling the trees of their forests, and they had planes for polishing the wood of their chariots. They constructed rims of iron to surround the wheels of their carts. They fabricated coats of mail, clubs, bows, arrows, javelins, swords or cleavers, and discs to carry on their warfare, to which they were sometimes called by the sound of the conch shell. They made cups, pitchers, and long and short ladles, for use, in their domestic economy and the worship of the gods. They employed professional barbers to cut off their hair. They knew how to turn the precious metals and stones to account ; for they had their golden earrings, golden bowls, and jewel necklaces. They had chariots of war from which they fought, and ordinary conveyances drawn by horses and bullocks ; they had rider-bearing steeds and grooms to attend them. They delighted to speak of their 'well-trained horses,' their 'masters of horses and chariots,' and their 'waggons' and 'famous cars.' Their princes and priests, and even gods sometimes had names and titles derived from their connexion with the equine race. They had the elephant in a state of subjection ; but it is not certain that they used it for warlike purposes.

"They had eunuchs in their community. The daughters of vice were seen in their towns, and that, it would appear, with but a small accompaniment of shame ; venders of spirits were also tolerated by them. They had also 'halls of justice ;' and though their worship was altogether of a domestic character, they had also 'halls of sacrifice' and 'halls of oblation.' Idol shrines are not once mentioned in connexion with them. They constructed skiffs, boats, rafts and ships ; they engaged in traffic and merchandise in parts somewhat remote from their usual dwellings. Occasional mention is made in their hymns of the ocean which they had probably reached by following the course of the Indus. Parties among them covetous of gain are represented as crowding the ocean in vessels on a voyage. A naval expedition to a foreign country is alluded to as frustrated by a shipwreck."

"There is no evidence that the Aryas, at the time to which

we refer, possessed the art of literal writing. The Vedas are in poetry, evidently intended for recitation; and it bears the name of *Sruti*, or what is merely *heard*." pp. 29-34 (Abridged).

One of the besetting faults of the Hindus is their proneness to run into debt. The early Aryas seem to have shown the same weakness.

The caste prohibition against crossing the "black water," is not found in the Vedas, but was a later invention of the Brahmans to keep the Hindus better under their control.

AMUSEMENTS.

Gambling was very common among the early Indians, and numerous illustrations are derived from the practice. In one of the hymns a gambler apparently describes his own experience:

1. The tumbling, air-born (products) of the great Vibhidaka tree (*i.e.*, the dice) delight me as they continue to roll on the dice board. The exciting dice seem to me like a draught of the soma-plant growing on mount Mujavat.

7. Hooking, piercing, deceitful, vexatious, delighting to torment, the dice dispense transient gifts, and again ruin the winner; they appear to the gambler covered with honey.

13. Never play with dice: practise husbandry; rejoice in thy property, esteeming it sufficient. X. 34.

"At a sacrifice," says, Mr. Kunte, "the Kshatriya especially played at dice with his wife or wives and sons."

Dancers or actors afforded entertainment to the Aryans. Ushas is said to display herself like a dancer who decks herself with ornaments. Allusion is made to the living going forth to dance and laugh after a funeral. Drums are mentioned, and a hymn in the Atharva Veda is addressed to that musical instrument.

They were fond of chariot races. In one of the hymns the poet prays that his chariot may win:

O Indra, help our chariot on, yea; thunderer, though it lag behind:
Give this my car the foremost place. VIII. 69. 4.

CRIME.

Thieves or robbers are mentioned in some passages as infesting the highways or stealing secretly. The following occurs in a hymn to Pushan: "Drive away from our path the waylayer, the thief, the robber." Another hymn says: "Men cry after him in battle as after a thief stealing clothes." Cattle were often stolen. "The aborigines found it easy to revenge themselves on the invading Aryas by driving away their cows. But the Aryas were also prepared against the annoyance. As soon as the herd of cows disappeared, hue and cry was raised, and sharp men who traced the track of a thief by observing footprints, set to work. The thief was detected." With shouts of thanks to Indra, the herd was recovered and driven home.

WARS.

In the Rig-Veda wars are frequently mentioned. Cows and horses were often the cause. Indra, is thus addressed: "O mighty Indra, we call upon thee as we go fighting for cows and horses." Max Müller says, "Fighting among or for the cows (*Goshuyudh*) is used in the Veda as a name for a warrior in general (I. 112, 122), and one of the most frequent words for battle is *gavasti*, literally 'striving for cows.'"

There are many allusions to wars with the aborigines whom the Aryas had ousted from their lands. They hung round the Aryan settlements, waylaid and robbed them at every opportunity, stole their cattle, and often attacked them in large numbers. Kutsa, with the help of Indra, is said to have slain "50,000 black-complexioned enemies."

Helmets, breastplates, shields and other defensive armour were used. Sharp-edged swords, spears, bows and arrows are mentioned. One of the hymns is addressed to weapons of war. Some of the references to the arrow are as follows:

> "With bow let us win kine, with bow the battle, with bow be victors in our hot encounters.

Loosed from the bowstring fly away, thou arrow, sharpened by our prayer.
Go to the foemen, strike them home, and let not one be left alive." VI. 75, 2, 16.

War chariots are mentioned. It would seem that the war-horses of the Aryas were regarded with terror by the aborigines. They were so highly prized by the Aryas that, under the name of Dadhikra, they became an object of worship. The war horse is thus described:

"And, fain to come forth first amid these armies, this way and that with rows of cars he rushes,
Gay like a bridesman, making him a garland, tossing the dust, champing the rein that holds him.
And at his thunder, as at that of heaven, those who attack tremble and are affrighted,
For when he fights against embattled thousands, dread is he in his striving; none may stay him." IV. 38.

Mr. Kunte thus describes the mode of warfare:

"Different bands of the Aryas marched under their leaders, each having a banner of his own, singing of the prowess of their ancestors, and of the aid which Indra or Brihaspati granted them, and blowing conches. The leader drove in a war-chariot covered with cow-hides: some used the bow and arrows: others had darts. The army was divided into infantry and cavalry. Often did the leader of bands attack a town, and putting every inhabitant to the sword, occupied it. Sometimes they were content with large booty. Thus simultaneously, many Aryan leaders, independently of each other, waged war against the Dasas and Dasyus who were often able to make an impression upon the invaders." *

RELIGION.

Many people in India look upon their forefathers who lived long ago as very old and very wise, while, compared with them we are but children. The contrary is the case. We are like the old people; the ancients were like the

* *Vicissitudes, &c.*, pp. 118, 119.

children. The world is about 4,000 years older than it was when the Aryans lived together in their common home. They were like young children who had no books, and were unable to read or write.

THE RELIGION OF THE UNDIVIDED ARYANS.

Young children often look upon things around them as if they had life. A girl will talk to her doll; if a little boy hurts himself against a table, he is inclined to beat it. The early Aryans supposed that the sun, the winds, the clouds, the rivers, and the like had life. They were awakened from darkness by the light of the sun, who seemed to grant them life and protection. They felt the winds sweeping past them; they heard the rumble of the thunder as it followed the spear-like flashes of light sent from the clouds. From being simply considered as alive, they were regarded as persons. They supposed the sky above them, the earth beneath them, the sun, the winds, the storms, fire, and the like to be gods.

The most ancient and greatest of the gods was called *Dyaus*, from a word meaning *to shine*. The great lord of all seemed to live in the sky from which came the light that cheered the heart and took away the fear of night.

Dyaus was worshipped by the early Aryans in their common home. Wherever the tribes went, the same heaven was above them, and the name was not forgotten. Dyaus is the same as *Zeus* in Greek; *Deus* in Latin; and *Tiu* in German. From *Deus* comes the English word *Deity*, meaning God who is light. From *Tiu* comes the word *Tuesday*.

Natural objects, from being thought of as persons, were next regarded as husband and wife, mother and son, brother and sister. Heaven and earth were looked upon as the father and mother of all things. The name *Dyaus-pitar*, Heaven-Father, is given in the Veda. The oldest Aryan prayer was to look up to the blue sky, and address the Heaven-Father. The Greek word *Zeupater* and the Latin *Jupiter*, have both the same meaning. There is no name which so much expresses both reverence and love.

The prayer which the Lord Jesus Christ taught begins with, "Our Father which art in heaven."

But the early Aryans were not content with the worship of the great Heaven-Father. The name *devas*, the bright ones, was given to different objects, *Gau*, the earth, was the Greek *Gaiá*, *Varuna*, the god of the encircling heavens, was the Greek *Ouranos*. The goddess *Ushas*, the dawn, was the *Eos* of the Greeks, and the *Aurora* of the latins. These must have been worshipped by the Aryans before they separated.

RELIGION OF THE EASTERN ARYANS.

THE VEDAS.

Before describing the gods worshipped by the Aryans after they came to India, some account may be given of the Vedas, the oldest and most sacred writings of the Hindus.

The word *Veda* comes from *vid*, to know. The Vedas are supposed to contain the knowledge which is best worth acquiring. The common idea is that the Vedas are eternal, that they existed in the mind of the Deity before the beginning of time. At the commencement of each Kalpa,* Brahm reveals them to Brahma, and they issue from his four mouths. They are taught by Brahma to the Rishis whose names they bear.

The Hindus divide their sacred books into two great classes, called *Sruti* and *Smriti*. *Sruti*, which means *hearing*, is applied to the books which are supposed to have been spoken by Brahma, and which the Rishis who wrote them only *heard*. *Smriti*, recollection, includes the sacred books allowed to have been composed by human authors. The Vedas belong to the former class; the Puranas, &c. to the latter.

At first there was only one Veda, now called the Rig-Veda. It means the Veda of praise. It is divided into ten

* A Kalpa is supposed to be a day and night of Brahma, equal to 4,320,000,000 years.

Mandalas or books, containing 1,028 hymns and 10,622 verses. The Yajur-Veda is the second. The name comes from *yaj*, sacrifice. It contains the verses taken from the Rig-Veda used in sacrifice, with some directions in prose. The Sama-Veda, the third, is all in poetry. It contains verses from the Rig-Veda which were chanted by the priests when sacrifices were offered. The Atharva-Veda is of later origin than the others. Manu speaks of only three Vedas. It contains about 760 hymns, of which only about one-sixth is found in the Rig-Veda. A great part of it consists of charms supposed to restore life, to cure sickness, to preserve from snake bite, and even to cover a bald head with hair. There are so many charms for the destruction of enemies that it is sometimes called the "Cursing Veda."

Who wrote the Vedas?—The common idea of the origin of the Vedas has been mentioned. The Hindu sacred books give several different accounts; some of which may be mentioned.

1. The Rig-Veda says that they sprang from the sacrifice of Purusha.
2. The Atharva Veda says that they were cut or scraped off from Skamba (the supporting Principle), being his hair and his mouth.
3. Another hymn of the Atharva Veda says that the Vedas sprung from Indra, and he sprung from them.
4. An Upanishad says that the Vedas were produced from Agni, Vayu and Surya.
5. The Sathapatha Brahmana says that they are the breathings of the Great Being.
6. The Taittiriya Brahmana says in one place that the Vedas are the hair of Prajapati's beard, and in another that Vach (speech) is the mother of the Vedas.
7. The Bhagavata Purana says that the Vedas issued from the mouth of Brahma.
8. The Harivamsa says that the Vedas were produced from the Gayatri.
9. The Mahabharata, Santiparva, says that Sarasvati was the mother of the Vedas.

10. The Vishnu Purana says that the Vedas are Vishnu. Several other accounts of their origin might be given.

The opinions of the Rishis who wrote the hymns will next be considered. The names of the authors of each hymn are preserved. Often the names of their fathers are given as well as their own. In later times it was pretended that they only wrote down what they heard; but of this there is not the slightest proof.

The Rishis claim to have written the hymns themselves, just as a carpenter makes a car, &c.

A Rishi says: "To him (Indra) I send forth a hymn, as a carpenter a car." Another says, "An acceptable and honorific hymn has been uttered to Indra by Vrihaduktha, maker of hymns."

Instead of the hymns being eternal, many of them are spoken of as *new*, while others are of ancient date. The Rishis thought that the gods would be better pleased with new hymns than old ones.

The following are examples: "Glorified by our newest hymns do thou bring us wealth, and food with progeny." "We invoke with an ancient hymn Bhaga." "He, (Indra) grew through the ancient and modern hymns of lauding Rishis."

The hymns themselves show that they were written when the Aryans were making their way into India, and had frequent wars with the aborigines. As already stated, the Indus is the great river of the Vedas; the Ganges is only twice mentioned.

Specimen Hymn.—The first hymn of the Rig-Veda is given below in an English translation.

1. I laud Agni, the great high priest, god, minister of sacrifice,
   The herald, lavishest of wealth.
2. Worthy is Agni to be praised by living as by ancient seers:
   He shall bring hitherward the gods.
3. Through Agni man obtaineth wealth, yea, plenty, waxing day by day,
   Most rich in heroes, glorious.
4. Agni, the flawless sacrifice, which thou encompassest about
   Verily goeth to the gods.
5. May Agni, sapient-minded priest, truthful, most gloriously great,
   The god, come hither with the gods.

6. Whatever blessing, Agni, thou wilt grant unto thy worshipper,
   That Angiras (Agni) is thy true gift.
7. To thee, dispeller of the night, O Agni, day by day with prayer,
   Bringing thee reverence, we come;
8. Ruler of sacrifices, guard of Law eternal, radiant one,
   Increasing in thine own abode.
9. Be to us easy of approach, even as a father to his son:
   Agni, be with us for our weal.

THE GODS OF THE VEDAS.

When several people describe things that are true, their accounts generally agree. If what they are saying is only conceived in their own minds, they will be sure to differ. The gods of the Vedas existed only in the imagination of the poets who wrote the hymns: hence their accounts often disagree.

Number.—The gods are generally spoken of as being "thrice-eleven" in number. "Ye gods, who are eleven in the sky, who are eleven on earth, and who in your glory are eleven dwellers in the (atmospheric) waters, do ye welcome this our offering." "Agni, bring hither according to thy wont, and gladden the three and thirty gods with their wives."

In the Rig-Veda iii. 9, 9, the gods are mentioned as being much more numerous: "Three hundred, three thousand, thirty and nine gods have worshipped Agni."

Origin and Immortality.—In the Vedas the gods are spoken of as immortal, but they are not regarded in general a self-existent beings; in fact, their parentage, in most cases, is mentioned.

Very different accounts are given of the origin of the gods. In many passages the gods are described as being the offspring of Heaven and Earth. Ushas, the Dawn, is characterised as the mother of the gods; Brahmanaspati is called their father; Soma is said to be the generator of Heaven, Earth, Agni, Surya, Indra, and Vishnu. Some of the gods are spoken of as being fathers and others as being

sons. The most extraordinary feat is ascribed to Indra: "Thou hast indeed begotten thy father and mother together from thy own body." As Max Müller remarks, "A god who once could do that, was no doubt capable of anything afterwards."

"The same god is sometimes represented as supreme, sometimes, as equal, sometimes, as inferior to others. There are as yet no genealogies, no settled marriages between gods and goddesses. The father is sometimes the son, the brother is the husband, and she who in one hymn is the mother, is in another the wife."

In some places Savitri and Agni are said to have conferred immortality on the gods; elsewhere it is said that the gods drink soma to obtain the same gift; but it is generally taught that they obtained their divine rank through austerities. The gods originally were all alike in power; but three of them desired to be superior to the rest; *viz.* Agni, Indra, and Surya. They continued to offer sacrifices for this purpose until it was obtained.

The immortality of the gods is only relative. They are supposed to the subject to the same law of dissolution as other beings. "Many thousands of Indras and of other gods have, through time, passed away in every mundane age." The gods both desire and are capable of *mukti*, liberation from future births.

Some of the principal gods will now be described.

INDRA.

The gods of the Hindus are somewhat like kings who reign for a time, and then give place to others. Among the early Aryans, Dyaus Pitar occupied the highest position among the gods. After they came to India, where the climate was different and where they had fierce battles with the aborigines, a new god took his place, who was supposed to be better able to render them assistance.

In the Punjab, to which the Aryans came, for months together the earth is exposed to the scorching rays of the sun, sometimes without a single shower, so that it is impos-

sible for the fields to be ploughed or the seed to be sown. The Aryans wanted a god in whose hands are the thunder and lightning, at whose command the refreshing showers would fall to render the earth fruitful. Such was Indra, whose name means *rain-giver*.

Vritra, the demon of drought, is supposed to confine the waters in the dark heavy clouds. He will not let them descend until Indra strikes him with his thunderbolt. The Maruts, storm-gods, help Indra in the battle, the sky and earth tremble at the noise. Vritra at last falls and dies—the drought is over, and rains begin.

Indra's aid as a warrior in battle was also prized.

Different accounts are given of the parentage of Indra. In one hymn Ekashtaka is said to be his mother; in another he is said to have sprung from the mouth of Purusha; while a third makes him to have been generated by Soma. According to the Mahabharata, Indra is one of the sons of Kasyapa.

Indra is exalted above Dyaus. "The divine Dyaus bowed before Indra."

"At the birth of thy splendour, Dyaus trembled."

Indra drives a golden chariot drawn by two yellow horses; the thunderbolt is his weapon, the rainbow is his bow; the Maruts, or storm-wind, are his companions. Like other Hindu gods, he is provided with wives, the chief of whom is called Indrani.

In the Vedas, Indra is characterised by his fondness for war and the intoxicating soma juice.

Even as an infant, Indra is said to have shown his warlike spirit. "As soon as he was born, the slayer of Vritra grasped his arrow, and asked his mother, Who are they that are renowned as fierce warriors?" "His love of the soma juice was shown as early." "On the day that thou wast born, thou didst, from love of it, drink the mountain-grown juice of the soma plant." He drank soma wine before he drank from his mother's breast.

Exhilarated by the soma, Indra goes forth to war.

The MARUTS, or storm-winds, are Indra's allies and companions. "They drive spotted stags, wear shining armour,

and carry spears in their hands; no one knows whence they come nor whither they go; their voice is heard aloud as they come rushing on; the earth trembles and the mountains shake before them."

While the Aryans were engaged in fierce contests with the aborigines, Indra held the highest rank. When the latter had been reduced to subjection, Indra gave place to other deities. In the Puranas, Indra is no longer the soma-drinking warlike god of the Vedas, but the gorgeous king of a voluptuous court, where dance and music occupy most of his time. Indra is said to have attained his proud position by his austere penances; and is in constant fear lest any mortals on earth attain the same rank by the same means.*

Many instances are recorded of his adultery. According to the Mahabharata, he seduced Ahalya, the wife of Gautama, his spiritual teacher. By the curse of the sage, Indra's body was impressed by a thousand marks, so that he was called Sa-yoni; but these marks were afterwards changed to eyes, and he is hence called 'the thousand-eyed.'

AGNI.

Agni is the god of fire, the Latin *ignis*, fire. He is one of the chief deities of the Rig-Veda, as far more hymns are addressed to him than to any other divinity except Indra.

Fire is very necessary for human existence. It enables food to be cooked; it gives the power of carrying on work at night; in cold climates it preserves people from being frozen to death. In early times, when lucifer matches were unknown, fire was looked upon with somewhat like religious awe. The production of fire by the friction of wood or its sudden descent from the sky in the form of lightning, seemed as marvellous as the birth of a child. In the hymns

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* Dutt's *Ancient India*, Vol. iii. pp. 278.

of the Vedas fire is praised and worshipped as the best and kindest of the gods, the only god who had come down from heaven to live on earth, the friend of man, the messenger of the gods, the mediator between gods and men, the immortal among mortals. He, it is said, protects settlements of the Aryans, and frightens away the "black-skinned enemies."

Various accounts are given of the origin of Agni. He is said to be a son of heaven and earth; he is called the eldest son of Brahma, and is then named Abhimani; he is reckoned amongst the children of Kasyapa and Aditi, and hence one of the Adityas. In the later writings he is described as a son of Angiras, king of the Pitris. He is occasionally identified with other gods and goddesses, as Indra, Vishnu, Varuna, Rudra, Sarasvati, &c. "All gods," it is said, "are comprehended in him."

Agni was worshipped in the fire kindled in the morning. The whole family gathered around it, regarding it with love and awe, as at once a friend and a priest. It was a visible god conveying the oblation of mortals to all gods. His nobleness was extolled, as, though a god, he deigned to sit in the very dwellings of men. At sunset, Agni is the only divinity left on earth to protect mortals till the following dawn; his beams then shine abroad and dispel the demons of darkness.

Agni's proper offering is ghee. When this is sprinkled into the flame, it mounts higher and glows more fiercely; the god has devoured the gift, and thus testifies his satisfaction and pleasure. Several of his epithets describe his fondness for butter. He is butter-fed, butter-formed, butter-haired, butter-backed, &c. The poor man who cannot offer ghee, brings a few pieces of wood to feed the fire.

As destroyer of the Rakshas, Agni assumes a different character. He is represented in a form as hideous as the beings he is invoked to devour. He sharpens his two iron tusks, puts his enemies into his mouth, and swallows them. He heats the edges of his shafts and sends them into the hearts of the Rakshas.

The first hymn of the Rig-Veda is addressed to Agni.

Varuna.

The name is derived from *var*, to cover. It represents the starry sky, covering all things. Afterwards it was changed into the name of a Being endowed with superhuman qualities. Varuna, as already mentioned, is the same as the Greek *Ouranos*, heaven. He was one of the Aryan gods before they separated.

Boundless knowledge is ascribed to him. The Atharva Veda says; "Varuna, the great lord of these worlds, sees as if he were near. If a man stands or walks or hides, if he goes to lie down or to get up, what two people sitting together whisper to each other, King Varuna knows it; he is there as the third. This earth, too, belongs to Varuna, the King, and this wide sky with its ends far apart. He who should flee far beyond the sky, even he would not be rid of Varuna, the King. King Varuna sees all this, what is between heaven and earth, and what is beyond. He has counted the twinklings of the eyes of men." While there is no such being as Varuna, all that is said of him applies to the Great Creator of heaven and earth.

Varuna is the only Vedic deity to whom a high moral character is attributed. The few hymns asking for pardon and purity are addressed to him. Examples will be given under another head.

In the Puranas, Varuna is no longer the awe-inspiring deity of the Vedas, but the mere god of the ocean. Instead of hating sin, in the Mahabharat he is described as having carried off Bhadra, the wife of the sage Utathya. As Varuna would not restore her Utathya drank up all the sea! Varuna afterwards yielded.

Sun Deities.

Surya and Savitri are two names by which the sun is addressed in the Vedic hymns. Sometimes Surya is called son of Dyaus, sometimes of Aditi. In one passage Ushas, the Dawn, is his wife; in another he is the child of the Dawn. He has several wives. According to later

legends, his twin sons, the Asvins, who ride in a golden car before Ushas, were born of a nymph called Asvini, from her having concealed herself in the form of a mare. As the brightness of Surya was too great for his wife Sanjna, her father Visvakarma cut part of him away. The fragments fell blazing to the earth, and from them Visvakarma formed the discus of Vishnu, the trident of Siva, and the weapons of the other gods! Surya is represented in a chariot drawn by seven horses. When he unharnesses his horses, the night spreads out her garment over everybody.

MITRA was another name for the sun. He is most frequently invoked in conjunction with Varuna. Vishnu was originally a solar being. This is indicated by his three strides, his position in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. But in the latter books his physical character soon vanishes. Pushan was the sun as viewed by shepherds. He carries an ox-goad, and is drawn by goats. As it is said in the Mahabharat that Rudra rendered him toothless by a kick, a kind of conjee is offered to him.

Max Müller thus shows how the sun was gradually developed into a supreme being:

"The first step leads us from the mere light of the sun to that light which in the morning wakes man from sleep, and seems to give new life, not only to man, but to the whole of nature. He who wakes us in the morning, who recalls the whole of nature to new life, is soon called 'the giver of daily life.'

"Secondly, by another and bolder step, the giver of daily light and life, becomes the giver of light and life in general. He who brings light and life to-day, is the same who brought life and light in the first of days. As light is the beginning of the day, so light was the beginning of creation, and the sun, from being a mere light bringer or life giver, becomes a creator, then soon also a ruler of the world.

"Thirdly, as driving away the dreaded darkness of the night and likewise as fertilizing the earth, the sun is conceived as a defender and kind protector of all living things.

"Fourthly, as the sun sees everything and knows everything, he is asked to forget and forgive what he alone knows."*

* *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 265, 266.

The worship of Surya has continued to the present time. It is to him that the Gayatri is addressed at his rising by every devout Brahman. This short verse is supposed to exert magical powers. It is as follows:

> Tat Savitur varenyam bhargo devasya dhímohi |
> dhiyo yo nah prachodayát.

It is differently translated. The following is one of the latest renderings:

> "May we attain that excellent glory of Savitar the god:
> So may he stimulate our prayers."*

It is simply an invocation to the sun to render religious performances successful. The Skanda Purana thus extols its powers:

"Nothing in the Vedas is superior to the Gayatri. No invocation is equal to the Gayatri, as no city is equal to Kasi. The Gayatri is the mother of the Vedas and of Brahmans. By repeating it a man is saved. What is there indeed that cannot be effected by the Gayatri? For the Gayatri is Vishnu, Brahma and Siva, and the three Vedas."

SOMA.

Hindus, at present, differ in their habits in two remarkable respects from their forefathers in Vedic times. One has already been noticed. The ancient Aryans delighted in eating beef, which is an utter abomination to their descendants. The other change is with regard to the use of intoxicants. Nearly a whole book of the Rig-Veda, containing 114 hymns, is devoted to the praise of Soma, and there are constant references to it in a large proportion of the other hymns. The ancient Aryans rejoiced in drinking; respectable Hindus now wisely abstain from what inebriates.

Not only were the people themselves fond of drinking the Soma juice, but the gods were represented as eager to partake of the beverage.

The soma is a creeping plant, with small white fragrant flowers. It yields a milky juice, which, when fermented,

* Rig-Veda, Book III. 62, 10.

is intoxicating. The hymns addressed to Soma were intended to be sung while the juice of the plant was being pressed out and purified.

The juice of the plant is said to be an immortal draught which the gods love. Soma, the god in the juice, is said to clothe the naked and heal the sick; through him the blind see, and the lame walk. Many divine attributes are ascribed to him. He is addressed as a god in the highest strains of veneration. All powers belong to him; all blessings are besought of him as his to bestow. He is said to be divine, immortal, and also to confer immortality on gods and men.

In later times Soma was a name given to the moon. When the Vishnu Purana was written, intoxicants were strictly forbidden; hence Soma, as the god of the Soma juice, was no longer known and praised. According to that Purana, Soma was the son of Atri, the son of Brahma.

The ancient Greeks had also a god of wine, called Bacchus.

GODDESSES.

Several goddesses are mentioned in the Vedas; but with the exception of Prithivi, the earth, Aditi, and Ushas, the dawn, little importance is attached to them. Sarasvati is celebrated both as a river and a deity. The wives of Agni, Varuna, &c. are mentioned, but no distinct duties are assigned to them. One hymn is assigned to Indrani, the wife of Indra, supposed to be a charm to get rid of a rival wife.

OBJECTS CONSIDERED DIVINE.

The *Yupa*, the post to which animals were tied in sacrifice, is addressed as divine. The prayer is offered, "Vanaspati (forest lord), grant us riches." A hymn is addressed to weapons of war. The ladle, a kind of large spoon, receives great honour. "The ladle," it is said, "established the sky." The sacrificial kusa grass, provided as seats for the gods, is said to support heaven and earth. A

hymn to the frogs concludes thus: "The frogs who give us cows in hundreds lengthen our lives in this most fertilizing season."

THE GODS NOT MENTIONED IN THE VEDAS.

Many of the principal gods now worshipped by the Hindus, are either wholly unmentioned in the Veda, or are noticed in an inferior and different capacity. The names of Siva, of Mahadeva, of Durga, of Kali, of Rama, of Krishna, never occur. There is a Rudra, who in after times was supposed to be the same as Siva, but in the Veda he is described as the father of the winds, and is a form of either Agni or Indra.

New gods were invented from time to time. When a man looked upon as holy died, a temple was set up in his honour. If he was supposed to make some good cures, especially among women and valuable cattle, his fame spread through the country. When any local god acquired high repute, the Brahmans made him an incarnation of Vishnu or Siva. One of the richest temples in South India, Tirupati, near Madras, was set up in honour of a man named Balaji.

OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES.

The early Aryans attached the greatest importance to sacrifice. It was regarded as the means of obtaining power over all visible and invisible beings, animate and inanimate objects. He who knew its proper application and had it duly performed was looked upon as the real master of the world. The creation of the world itself was even regarded as the fruit of a sacrifice performed by the Supreme Being.

Kinds of Offerings and Sacrifices.—The products of the cow were offered,—milk, curds, and butter. Grain was offered in different forms—fried, boiled, or as flour-balls (pinda). Sacrifices included goats, sheep, cows, buffaloes, horses, men—the last two being considered of the greatest

value. Somayajna was the most frequent kind of offering. Incense was burnt, but tufts of wool and horse dung were also used.

Times of Offering, &c.—The central part of a house was dedicated to the gods. When a new house was entered upon, the fire was kindled for the first time by rubbing together pieces of wood, after which it was not allowed to go out. Morning and evening devout Aryas assembled around the sacred fire. The master of the house, as *agnihotri*, made offerings to it of wood and ghee, hymns were chanted, the children joining in the chorus and the words *svaha* and *vausat* were reiterated till the roof resounded.

The new and full moons were seasons of sacrifice. The house was decorated; grass was tied over the door and about its sides.

Every four months, at the beginning of spring, the rainy season, and autumn, sacrifices were offered.

The first ripe fruits were offered generally twice a year.

A he-goat was sacrificed once a year at the beginning of the rainy season in the house of the sacrificer.

In addition, offerings and sacrifices were made on many other occasions, some of which will be mentioned hereafter.

Sacrificial Implements.—Among these were the following: *Yúpa*, a post to which the animal to be sacrificed was tied; pots of various kinds for holding water, for boiling milk and flesh; a wooden tub in which to keep the filtered soma juice; a knife to cut up the body of the slain animal; an axe to divide the bones; a spit to roast parts of the flesh; several kinds of wooden spoons; a cup for drinking and offering soma, &c. The *sphya* was a piece of wood, shaped like a wooden sword, with which lines were drawn round the sacrificial ground. One of the priests had to hold it up high so long as the chief ceremonies lasted, to keep off rakshas, evil spirits.

Sacrificers and Priests.—In early times any one might preside at a sacrifice. The Brahman was at first simply an assistant. King Janaka asserted his right of performing sacrifices without the intervention of priests.

As great importance was attached to the hymns sung at sacrifices, Brahmans who committed them to memory acquired more and more power. As time advanced, also, the ceremonies became more and more complicated, till at some sacrifices 16 priests were required, each performing his own peculiar office.

One priest watched over the whole in a sitting posture. The *Hotris* (callers) chanted the hymns of the Rig-Veda; the *Udgatris* (singers) sang the hymns of the Sama-Veda; the *Adhvaryus* (persons of the ceremonies) muttered the mantras of the Yajur-Veda.

The last had to build the altar, bring the sacrificial implements, kill the animals, press the Soma, dress the offerings, throw some of them into the fire, &c.

A few of the principal offerings and sacrifices will now be described.

Soma.

Soma juice was an essential part of every offering of importance. Dr. Rajendralala Mitra says that it was made with the expressed juice of a creeper, diluted with water, mixed with barley meal, clarified butter, and the meal of wild paddy, and fermented in a jar for nine days. It may be concluded that a beverage prepared by the vinous fermentation of barley meal, should have strong intoxicating effects, and it is not remarkable, therefore, that the Vedas should frequently refer to the exhilaration produced by its use on men and gods.*

The Aryans were fond of the soma themselves. It is thus described: "O soma, poured out for Indra to drink, flow on purely in a most sweet and most exhilarating current."

All the gods are supposed to delight in the soma juice, especially Indra. After Indra has had his fill of soma, he is asked to grant cows.

The soma juice offered to the gods was apparently poured on the bundles of Kusa grass provided for them as seats.

* *Indo-Aryans*, Vol. I. p. 419.

ANIMAL SACRIFICES.

The animals chiefly sacrificed were goats, sheep, cows, bullocks, buffaloes, deer, and occasionally horses. Large numbers were sometimes sacrificed. Three hundred buffaloes are mentioned as having been offered to Indra.

Modern Hindus, who now worship the cow, can scarcely believe that their Aryan forefathers sacrificed her and ate her flesh. But the Vedas frequently refer to ceremonies, called *gomedha*, in which the cow was sacrificed. Minute directions are given as to the character of the animal to be chosen. The Taittiriya Brahmana of the Yajur Veda gives the following rules:

"A thick-legged cow to Indra; a barren cow to Vishnu and Varuna; a black cow to Pushan; a cow that has brought forth only once to Vayu; a cow having two colors to Mitra and Varuna; a red cow to Rudra; a white barren cow to Surya, &c."

One great sacrifice, called the *Panchasaradiya sava*, was celebrated every five years. At this seventeen young cows were immolated. "Whoever wishes to be great," says the Taittiriya Brahmana, "let him worship through the Panchasaradiya. Thereby, verily, he will be great."

Oxen were sacrificed as well as cows. The Taittiriya Brahmana prescribes: "A dwarf ox to Vishnu; a drooping horned bull to Indra; a piebald ox to Savitri; a white ox to Mitra, &c.

Ignorant Hindus now allege that the animals were not really killed, but that after the form of sacrificing had been performed, they were allowed to go free. This statement is a pure fabrication. "Nothing," says Dr. Clark, "is more conclusive than the evidence on this point that the animal sacrificed was really killed and subsequently eaten."

Ashvamedha.—This rite was probably borrowed from the Scythians in Central Asia, who often sacrificed horses. The same importance was not attached to it in Vedic times as it acquired in after ages.

In the Ramayana (Balakandam) the horse sacrifice is

employed by the childless Dasaratha as the means of obtaining sons. The queen Kausalya killed the horse with three strokes, and lay embracing its dead body all night, after which she bore Rama. Any intelligent Hindu can judge of the merit of such an act.

A later idea was that the Ashvamedha was celebrated by a monarch desirous of universal dominion. Another fiction was that a hundred celebrations deposed Indra from the throne of Swarga, and elevated the sacrificer to his place.

PURUSHAMEDHA, HUMAN SACRIFICES.

Human sacrifices, though now regarded with horror, were practised in ancient times by nearly all nations. The Aryan Hindus, the Greeks, Romans, Germans and Britons, once lived together, speaking the same language, and following the same customs. We know that human sacrifices were offered by the Western Aryans at an early period. In England, large numbers of human beings were burnt alive in images made of wicker-work. At Athens, a man and a woman were annually sacrificed to expiate the sins of the nation. The Germans sometimes immolated hundreds at a time. It is therefore very probable that the practice prevailed also among the Eastern Aryans.

The subject has been carefully investigated by Dr. Rajendralala Mitra, the most distinguished Indian scholar of modern times, in a paper originally published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Some maintain that human sacrifices are not authorised in the Vedas, but were introduced in later times. Dr. R. Mitra says: "As a Hindu writing on the actions of my forefathers—remote as they are—it would have been a source of great satisfaction to me if I could adopt this conclusion as true; but I regret I cannot do so consistently with my allegiance to the cause of history."

His paper on the subject occupies 84 pages in his *Indo-Aryans*, giving numerous quotations both in Sanskrit and English. The following is only a brief summary.

The gentlest of beings, the simple-minded women of

Bengal, were for a long time in the habit of consigning their first-born babes to the sacred river Ganges at Sagar Island, and this was preceded by a religious ceremony, though it was not authorised by any of the ancient rituals. If the spirit of the Hindu religion has tolerated, countenanced or promoted such acts, it would not be by any means unreasonable or inconsistent, to suppose that it should have, in primitive times, recognised the slaughter of human beings as calculated to appease, gratify, and secure the grace of the gods."

The earliest reference to human sacrifice occurs in the first book of the Rig-Veda. It contains seven hymns supposed to have been recited by one Sunahsepha when he was bound to a stake preparatory to being immolated. The story is given in the Aitareya Brahmana of the Rig-Veda.

Harischandra had made a vow to sacrifice his first-born to Varuna if that deity would bless him with children. A child was born, named Rohita, and Varuna claimed it; but the father evaded fulfilling his promise under various pretexts until Rohita, grown up to man's estate, ran away from home, when Varuna afflicted the father with dropsy. At last Rohita purchased one Sunahsepha from his father Ajigarta for a hundred cows. When Sunahsepha had been prepared, they found nobody to bind him to the sacrificial post. Then Ajigarta said, "Give me another hundred, and I shall bind him." They gave him another hundred cows, and he bound him. When Sunhasepha had been prepared and bound, when the Apri hymns had been sung, and he had been led round the fire, they found nobody to kill him. Next Ajigarta said, "Give me another hundred, and I shall kill him." They gave him another hundred cows, and he came whetting the knife. Sunahsepha then recited the hymns praising Agni, Indra, Mitra, Varuna, and other gods. He says:—

> "13. Bound to three pillars captured Sunahsepha thus to the Aditya made his supplication.
> Him may the sovran Varuna deliver, wise, ne'er deceived, loosen the bonds that bind him." I. 24.

Varuna, pleased with the hymns of Sunahsepha, set him free. Disgusted with his father, he forsook him, and became the adopted son of Visvamitra, his maternal uncle.

This story shows that human sacrifices were really offered. If Harischandra had simply to tie his son to a post and after repeating a few mantras over him, let him off perfectly sound, he could easily have done so. "The running away of the son from his father would also be unmeaning; the purchase of a substitute stupid; the payment of a fee of a hundred head of cattle to undertake the butcher's work quite supererogatory; and the sharpening of the knife by Ajigarta a vain preliminary." Dr. R. Mitra adds: "Seeing that, until the beginning of this century, the practice of offering the first-born to the river Ganges was common, and the story simply says that Sunahsepha was offered to the water-god Varuna as a substitute for the first-born Rohita, he can perceive nothing in it inconsistent or unworthy belief."

Max Müller says that the story "shows that, at that early time, the Brahmans were familiar with the idea of human sacrifices, and that men who were supposed to belong to the caste of the Brahmans were ready to sell their sons for that purpose."

The Kalika Purana says: "By a human sacrifice attended by the forms laid down, Devi remains gratified for a thousand years, and by a sacrifice of three men one hundred thousand years." A human sacrifice is described as *atibali* (highest sacrifice.)

"The offering of one's own blood to the goddess is a mediæval and modern rite. It is made by women, and there is scarcely a respectable house in all Bengal, the mistress of which has not at one time or other, shed her blood under the notion of satisfying the goddess by the operation. Whenever her husband or a son is dangerously ill, a vow is made that, on the recovery of the patient, the goddess would be regaled with human blood."

REACTION AGAINST SACRIFICES.

There have been many changes in the religious beliefs and practices of the Hindus. They have changed their gods again and again as has been already shown; Dyaus, Varuna, Agni Indra, now being superseded by Vishnu, Siva, Rama, and Krishna.

The chief leader in the movement against sacrifices and the use of soma beer, was Gautama Buddha, the son of an Indian Rajah, who lived about 2,400 years ago. His first command was, "Thou shalt not take any life." This referred to life of any kind. His priests were forbidden even to pluck up any vegetable, which was supposed to have life like animals, and into which a person might pass in another birth.

Another command of Buddha was, "Thou shalt not taste any intoxicating drink." The evils of drunkenness began to be felt, and though the Rig-Veda has 114 hymns in praise of the soma beer, its use was given up by the great body of the Hindus, though some tribes have retained their drinking habits.

Some of the leading doctrines of Buddha were adopted by the Brahmans, and the slaying of animals, even in sacrifice, became revolting to them.

The Vaishnava worship has had a considerable influence in putting a stop to animal sacrifices. It has been mentioned that within the last five or six centuries it has replaced the sacrifice of goats and buffaloes, even to Chandika, by pumpkins and sugarcane.

Goats and buffaloes are still offered to Kali, but the image of a man, after the ceremony of *pranpratishta*, is substituted for a human being.

REVIEW.

A short account has been given of the earliest inhabitants of India. It has been described how Hindus and Europeans, the Eastern and Western Aryans, once lived together and worshipped the same God under the same

name, Dyaus Pitar, Heaven Father. While some Aryans travelled westward and peopled Europe, others went towards the rising sun, and conquered Northern India. Their battles with the Dasyus, their mode of life, their gods, and their sacrifices, have been described.

Although the Vedas are regarded as the most sacred books of the Hindus, people now do not act up to them. The Rishis, who wrote the Vedas, killed cows and ate their flesh, which is now regarded with horror by the Hindus.

In some respects, Hindus now living may copy the example of their forefathers. In Vedic times, women were more honoured and had greater liberty than at present. Infant marriages were unknown. Caste, in its present form, did not exist.

But the religion of the Vedas cannot be adopted. We cannot believe in thrice-eleven deities with their wives. We cannot worship Indra, Agni, the Sun-god, &c. There is only one true God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Indra and Agni never had any existence.

We cannot make the offerings of the Vedas. We cannot invite Indra to drink the soma juice like a "thirsty stag." We cannot sacrifice buffaloes, bullocks, cows and sheep; we cannot perform the horse-sacrifice.

Neither the waters of the Ganges nor the blood of bulls or goats can wash away sin. The one true God has provided a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who became incarnate and died on the cross for our salvation. Pardon of sin is freely offered to all who seek it in His name, trusting in Him as their Saviour, and trying to follow His example of spotless holiness. Space does not permit the way of salvation to be described in detail. The reader is referred to *Short Papers for Seekers after Truth*,* and, above all, to the New Testament.

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